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Alumni Profile

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No cheating:

Hyde studies international elections



Susan Hyde '00

Susan Hyde '00 is making a major transition from graduate student to Ivy League faculty member. She finished her Ph.D. from the University of California-San Diego and has joined the political science faculty at Yale University this fall.

Hyde had been serving as a research fellow in governance studies at the Brookings Institution in Washington, D.C., while completing her dissertation on the promotion of democracy. Her focus is international elections observation. She has visited Venezuela, Indonesia and Albania for her research. She also has read hundreds of reports from other elections observers.

"The puzzle I started with is, why do leaders of countries invite international elections observers and then cheat in front of them?" she said. "Another thing I'm doing is applying experimental methods to look at whether international observers reduce fraud on election day if they are randomly assigned to polling stations."

Her research shows fraud is reduced. But the cheating observed is often not as explicit as shoving a handful of pre-marked ballots into a box, she said.

"Mostly, we're looking for procedural violations, such as family voting. In Albania, a family would come in; and the head of the family would fill out everyone's ballot, which is prohibited under Albanian law, but it's a long-standing practice. The voting began at 6 a.m., and I don't think we saw a woman cast her own ballot before noon."

Indonesia, where she witnessed voting during two trips in 2004, had a very successful presidential election, Hyde said. "It's sort of an amazing feat that they can pull it off. The country has nearly 600,000 polling stations, so it's a gigantic event – it's much more diverse than I

had imagined, and in parts of the country, ballot boxes had to be carried in on foot from remote areas; it took a week."

Hyde noted that the transition to democracy can be turbulent, even violent, and economic stability is more important than democracy to some people. "I do think, on balance, that the people who say democracy is not for everyone are the ones who benefit most from not having democracy," she said.

Hyde, who grew up in Sisters, is a Linfield product in more than one sense. Her parents, Glenda and Dayton Hyde, met and married while they were students at the college; both graduated in 1974.

Hyde ran cross-country for Linfield's track team. She had considered law school after graduation, but was steered in another direction by her professors, including Dawn Nowacki and Howard Leichter, both political science professors.

Both remember Hyde as an outstanding student. They said they are pleased but not surprised that she has been hired by an Ivy League university.

"She is an extraordinary young woman, in just about every respect," Leichter said. "She has a well developed social

conscience. She is articulate and a serious scholar, but also very generous and gregarious."

Nowacki described Hyde as "engaging and disciplined in a joyous way. Anything she sets her mind to, she does very well." Nowacki said she was pleased when Hyde was accepted at UC-San Diego, one of the nation's top international affairs graduate programs.

At Yale, Hyde will work with the Yale Center for International and Area Studies and will teach courses in international affairs.

"When I'm thinking of how to run my classes," she said, "the people I tend to think back to are people at Linfield, not what I've observed at the bigger universities. It's a different style of teaching."

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– Beth Rogers Thompson